

From: Mr. RaggySocks
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/16/02 3:12pm
Subject: Microsoft settlement is weak

Dear Honorable Sirs/Madam:

I am not opposed to all things Microsoft. However, time and again, I feel that I have been harmed as a user, a developer, and an administrator by Microsoft's practices in protecting its desktop monopoly and leveraging it to other markets.

Microsoft has a history of preventing other software from working properly with its operating system. DR-DOS is a notable example. And any user can also tell you how their Netscape, or Realplayer or any other piece of software that Microsoft competes with, suddenly fails to work after they have installed a Windows update.

Microsoft's abuse of its monopoly eliminated choice long ago, and it is now difficult to find a competitive product. Due to this, I am skeptical of the efficacy of the proposed revised final settlement. I also feel that the revised final settlement isn't effective in preventing Microsoft from further leveraging its desktop monopoly. I do not oppose Microsoft's .Net initiatives, as the competition will be useful in forcing both .Net and Java 2 Enterprise Edition to improve. But allowing them to integrate their efforts with their desktop monopoly feels like a mistake.

When AT&T was broken up, there weren't any competitors left in its market. The act of splitting AT&T created competition instantly. In the same way, the barrier to entry is high in all markets tangential to the PC desktop and I believe the situation warrants a similar remedy.

Since the possibility of a breakup of Microsoft has surfaced, many critics have stated that Microsoft is the engine of the technology economy. However, recent evidence shows that the economic impact of a breakup will not be catastrophic. Windows XP has not, and is not, going to jumpstart the economy.

I believe a key benefit of splitting up Microsoft is the elimination of their monopoly on the desktop. Ensure that the companies follow a reference standard that they agree to. Allow them to add functionality so long as it doesn't interfere with their reference standard for the operating system. In this way, they can be forced to adhere to standards and to create compatible systems. This will create competition, fostering innovation, and benefiting customers while minimizing harm.

Though I doubt that a breakup will be agreed upon, I must insist that the current proposal does not go far enough to protect customers.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this case.

Sincerely,
S. Cheng

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